

Chesley Sullenberger III

A Hero for All Seasons

When Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger safely piloted US Airways Flight 1549 to an emergency landing in New York City's Hudson River on January 15, 2009, he saved everyone on board—and became an international celebrity. The ensuing media coverage surrounding the "Miracle on the Hudson," and the hero's mantle bestowed upon him, changed his life forever.

The first of two books by Captain Sullenberger, *Highest Duty: My Search for What Really Matters* (Morrow, Dec.), will be available later this year. He tells *Show Daily* it will cover more than just the event itself. "I think in describing my experiences, the reader is going to be able to see parts of themselves and reflect on their own lives. This is an everyman story."

The book chronicles how his ideals and life experiences prepared him for the event and its aftermath, plus "lessons the reader can take home." One of these is to "find your passion early in life," says Captain Sullenberger. "People tend to be good at things they are passionate about, and I think that benefits society as a whole. Also, there is no substitution for hard work and preparation."

With more than 40 years of flying experience as both a U.S. fighter pilot and a commercial pilot, he was ready when disaster struck Flight 1549 shortly after takeoff. A bird strike caused two engines to lose thrust, necessitating an emergency landing. "I think what was essential that day was that I had learned the fundamentals so well; it all came together. That and having a very experienced crew."

Though Captain Sullenberger has stated repeatedly that he and his crew were merely doing what they were trained for, he admits, "I knew something about the event captured the imagination of people around the globe. They wanted good news and a reason to feel hopeful again. They wanted to know that our ideals are still true in a time of disillusionment and bad news."

Accepting the hero's mantle has not been easy for Captain Sullenberger, but he says he understands people's gratitude. He adds, "I feel an obligation to do as much good with this attention as I can while I have it." Part of that is found in the pages of *Highest Duty*.

"I think that the title *Highest Duty* suggests that we have an obligation to each other in society—to have certain values and behave in certain ways. We also have an obligation to prepare to be the best we can be. I think, in a nutshell, that is what I want to convey with this book," says Captain Sullenberger, whose personal heroes include the men and women serving in the U.S. military, Abraham Lincoln and Ernest Shackleton—another hero who safely rescued his entire crew from certain death in Antarctica nearly 100 years ago.

The new author will be at the Uptown stage today, 3–5 p.m., giving a talk and autographing excerpts of his book.

—Karen Jones

